Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
Editor: Michael P. Birks, 36 Trevor Road, Flixton, Manchester M41 5QH. England. 0161 747 5924.

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The Central American Group is a part of the Spanish Main Philatelic Society, the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is free with your subscription. The Secretary is Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, Peterborough PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. The subscription is currently £8 in Europe or $20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling or US$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/$54 and a five year subscription of £30/$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining during the course of the year the appropriate part subscriptions should be added - Feb-Apr £6/$15; May-Aug £4/$10; Sep-Nov £2/$5 to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect.

The Central American Group caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £8/$15 resident in the UK or in Europe, or £11/$19 elsewhere. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining after June 1st, add 50% to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, Stockport SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 0161-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group for overseas members.

We regret we cannot accept dollar cheques for subscriptions because each cheque costs a minimum of £5/$8 to negotiate.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/$1.50 each, although Volumes 1 and 2 are sold out. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent the the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable. Payments must be made in sterling or in dollar bills.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, Redhill, Surrey RH1 4PL, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7AP, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

350 Years of Papel Sellado

Published by the International Society of Guatemala Collectors, Inc.. 64 pages, softback.

Collectors of Guatemala will, no doubt, be familiar with the excellent publications produced by the ISGC amongst which are the world renowned Handbooks. From this outstanding Society we now have this new volume which covers Papel Sellado (Revenue Stamped Paper) used in the Province of Guatemala. This outstanding work presents and illustrates all that is known about the revenue stamped paper from its introduction in 1640 to the end of its general use in 1992. Although much remains to be learnt on this complex subject, this Handbook will be the reference text on this subject for many years to come. It is the result of 30 years of research and systematic recording by the late James C Andrews and has been completed by the Society President, Madame Cécile Gruson who also produced the excellent illustrations. What is particularly good about this Handbook are the explanations which punctuate the listing, providing background to those of us who may be new to, or poorly informed on, this subject; all credit to Leo J Harris for that.

Recommended.

Copies are available from Michael J Barie, Box 1445, Detroit, MI 48231, at $18 US/$20 elsewhere, for airmail service add £1.50. Payment must be in US dollars and cheques drawn on foreign banks must be without bank charges unless sufficient is added to cover these.

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Vol.IV, No. 77 **October 1999**

EDITORIAL

Returning home from holiday a day early because of the English weather I was able to attend Midpex after all. For me this two-yearly event is something to look forward to and I was sorry that more of you did not join us. John West, Hamish Reid, David Hankey, John Masterton and myself spent a very pleasant evening together (described by Hamish as "a bonding frenzy of the 'vineyard Warriors' ") but there was room for more. It seems the pull of PhilexFrance was too much to resist for some and I think it a great shame that there was a clash of dates. Organisers please note!

Our 12 frames were swiftly filled enabling Hamish to tour the other stands and the dealers. Although both he and John spent more money in the bar than with the dealers, David Hankey and I did a little better. It is still possible to find items from Nicaragua undiscovered in dealers' boxes and it is probably the best place outside the York fair to go rummaging amongst "new" dealers.

Sadly no new members were enrolled but we were able to assist other collectors in peripheral aspects of their own material. John West's opinions were eagerly sought as were those of David Hankey and Alan Codling. Alan, having brought a frame of Honduras TPOs which had been advertised to the Railway Society, was available to extol their virtues to the uninitiated. I am pleased to say that he has agreed to write these up for the CANL for some not too distant issue. John West got the freebies as usual – something to do with rolls of RDPs , I think. Clearly the objective of attracting non-members to specialist societies is not succeeding, not only in our case it seems, and so the concept needs a "make-over" from the ABPS if it is to succeed. Nevertheless, those who did not attend are the poorer for it.

It was pleasing to see the colour photocopies supplied by Gerard Marque, Peter Hansen and Leland Crane up in the frames. You had to have good eyesight to see that these were not the originals and so it was a good way of overseas members displaying their stamps to the society. At this point it would be a good time to mention the Spanish Main Cup competition in December. 16 sheets on any subject would be welcomed by Hamish at 12 Ellerdale Road, London NW3 6BB and of course they can be colour photocopies to enable our overseas members to take part. I'm sorry we cannot send the Cup overseas if you win, but your name will be immortalised! Do, please, give it your serious consideration.

It would appear that voices are being raised against the category of "importance" in terms of judging philatelic exhibits. Brian Moorhouse spoke out recently in *Mainsheet* and Hamish Reid sends me a cutting from the Editor of the Philatelic Exhibitor, John Hotchner who says "What [importance] does is to penalize obscurity". Who could disagree with that. I am reminded of my judge training at "107". We were told that a display of Ceylon we were looking at (which was truly superb) should score high in "importance". To this day I cannot justify the description of dots on the map such as Ceylon being "important". Could anyone say that if Ceylon had never existed philately would be significantly poorer? Surely Panama and its canal had a much more profound effect on philately than Ceylon? Too often this term is confused with "popular", "fashionable" or "rare" and these terms are not synonymous – and if they are they should not be! All importance does for us is to place us several steps below much more common British Commonwealth material and gloss over the true nature of the material we collect. How about a category called "difficulty" instead, which would take into account the degree of difficulty of putting together the display. Then Chaco War would rate 10 out of 10 ('cos Brian's got it all) and 1d Blacks would rate 1 out of 10 because they are available everywhere at a price. Can't see it happening, can you?

I hope that you have had a lot of pleasure from our journal, for now it is time to renew your subscription. As I write on the day of the British eclipse no decision has been made about next year's rates yet, but the enclosed renewal form will contain all the necessary information. We look forward to hearing from you soon as reminders are expensive and do take up my time.

mpb

For the diary:- ~~Saturday 11th September 1999. Victory Services Club~~
~~Saturday 30th October 1999. London Stamp & Cover Show.~~ Both events cancelled through lack of support.

Saturday 4th December 1999. Victory Services Club.
AGM & Spanish Main Cup Competition.

GUATEMALA:
CATALOGUE CORRECTIONS

by MARK SPYCHER

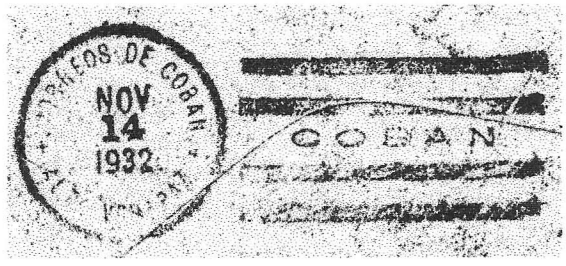
The Q0.03 (3 cent.) on 3 pesos dark green airmail stamp with surcharge in carmine – Guatemala Handbook Vol. 2, No. 390. SG 269; Scott C22; Michel 262b; Yvert 20.

All the above mentioned catalogues give the date of issue for this stamp as being 1 January 1933, except Yvert which merely mentions 1932.

In Volume 2 of our Handbook, on page 436, we find the following statement:

> "A second decree, dated October 5, 1932, called again for the surcharging of the 3 pesos with the new value of Q0.03, but in carmine instead of dark violet. This stamp was placed on sale October 18 or 19, 1932, or January 1, 1933, according to various sources."

Having recently checked my holdings of Guatemala air covers, I found four of them all sent from Guatemala to Cobán, and all dated November and December of 1932.



Backstamp: 14 November 1932.

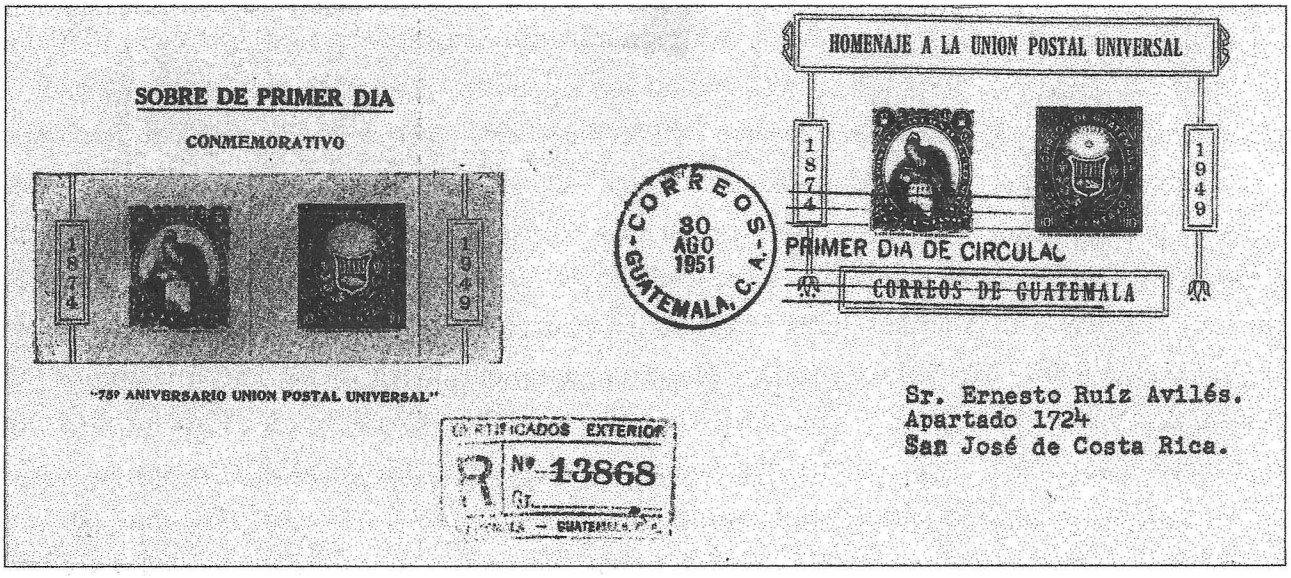
The illustration on the previous page shows the earliest cover with an unclear datestamp (probably November 13th), backstamped Cobán, November 14, 1932. The remaining three covers are dated December 3, December 16 and December 28, 1932. They are all backstamped one day, or in one case, two days later.

There can be no doubt that this stamp appeared some time during the latter part of October 1932. The January 1, 1933 date is, therefore, INCORRECT. Are earlier dates known?

The U.P.U. Souvenir Sheet of 1951, Guatemala Handbook No. 711 (volume 2, page 510)
SG 518; Scott 338; Michel 526/527, sheet 6; Yvert Sheet 7.

Here we have another case of an INCORRECT date of issue. Both the Handbook, Gibbons and Scott give the date of issue as being October 22, 1951 (Michel and Yvert only mention "1951").

This sheet should originally have appeared in 1949 but for various reasons was delayed until 1951. As can be seen from the illustration of an F.D.C. mailed to San José, Costa Rica, it was finally issued on *August 30, 1951,* which is the correct date.



Of course the founder of the ISGC, Joe Mandos, got it right in an article he wrote for *El Quetzal No.32,* which appeared in October 1951, when he wrote;

> "U.P.U. SHEETS:
> At last they have appeared and I must say they are quite attractive showing a reproduction of the 1 centavo Quetzal type stamp of 1882 in red and the 10 centavos stamp of 1871 in blue. The first day of issue was August 30, 1951, a long time after the celebration of the Universal Postal Union in 1949. The stamps are engraved and were printed by the Tipografia Nacional Guatemala, C.A. in the amount of 100,000 sheets. This total is more than enough to supply the trade. However, the face value of the sheet is only 11 cents and for the fact that the U.P.U. issues have proved popular, they may be in for a good future. No errors have been reported as yet for these imperforate sheets. Special first day covers were prepared by the post office showing a reproduction of the two stamps, in blue."

COSTA RICAN TRANSATLANTIC AIRMAIL RATES 1930-1947

Part 2

by Dr R H SAUNDRY

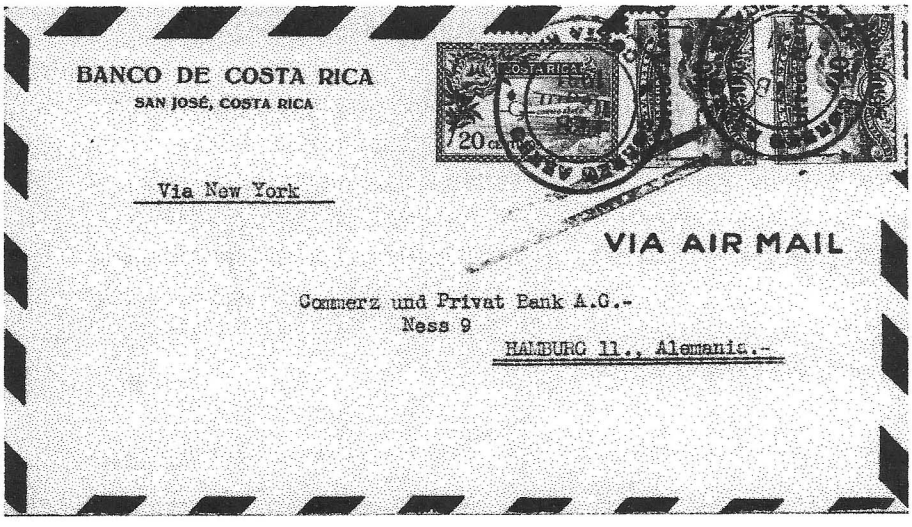
If we were to peruse Mitchell's table we would see in the bottom horizontal line that specific airmail rates to "Unlisted Countries" were listed for the second to fifth successive airmail rates schedules effective 1st October 1932 to 5th October 1939. Clearly there was no trans-Atlantic airmail service available for this period and all airmail covers to Europe could only be flown as far as New York and the trans-Atlantic part of the journey could only be completed by steamer. Inspection of Mitchell's table tells us that in this period the only difference between the airmail rates to the USA and to "unlisted countries" was 5 ctmos., the sum that neatly takes into account the difference in the first class letter rate between Costa Rica and a UPAE country on the one hand, and between Costa Rica and a non-UPAE country on the other. But we are getting ahead of ourselves and to appreciate the finer points of computing Costa Rican international airmail rates we have to consider how Costa Rica arrived at her various airmail rates schedules.

Until the time Costa Rica was provided with its first sustained international airmail service in 1930 the only way mails could ever leave the country was by surface means. Under the provisions of the UPU *surface mails sent to a destination in a foreign UPU country were rated at 20 ctmos* (per weight steps of (?) 50 grams). In fact the first Costa Rican "airmail" stamp (Scott C1, issued June 1926) was not actually an airmail stamp at all, despite showing an aircraft bearing the words "CORREO AEREO" on the fuselage. This 20 ctmos. stamp was specifically issued to prepay the foreign first class (surface) letter rate. Practically all countries of the Americas, (Canada, being a British dominion, was a notable exception), plus Spain, had joined a further postal organisation known as the Postal Union of the Americas and Spain (the "UPAE"). The most important bearing of Costa Rica's UPAE membership on our trans-Atlantic rates studies is that all signatory states agreed to circulate first class surface mails between themselves at their respective domestic rates. *On 11 March 1930, the date international airmail services began, the prevailing Costa Rican domestic letter rate was 13 ctmos.* and one could send a first class letter to the United States, or even to Spain, for only 13 ctmos., instead of the UPU foreign rate of 20 ctmos..

We have to add a special word of caution when trying to interpret postage on airmail covers sent to Spain. Since Spain was also a full member of the UPAE, it is believed that *airmail covers addressed to Spain should always bear postage less than to other European countries to reflect the difference in the APAE and UPU surface rates. Airmail rates always include a portion reflecting the prevailing surface rates.* Costa Rican flight covers addressed to Spain are very elusive and those few the present writer has examined have always borne stamps consistent with the full European rates. Whether or not this means lower UPAE surface rates were not charged by Costa Rica on letters flown to Spain, or if these few covers were erroneously overcharged, must ultimately depend upon analysis of additional covers. Certainly the number of covers currently known is too small a sample for definite conclusions.

When the first of Costa Rica's airmail rates schedules was drawn up in 1930 this reflected charges payable to the carriers, Pan American Airways, under the terms of the agreed contract. At that time American airmail postage rates were formulated assuming ½ oz. weight steps. The metric equivalent of ½ ounce is c14 grams and rounding up to the nearest 5 grams, i.e. 15 grams, this neatly explains why the first of Costa Rica's airmail rate schedules was based on 15 gram steps. (We note that Nicaragua was far more pedantic in drawing up its own airmail schedules in 1929 and used 14 gram weight steps.)

The Costa Rican postal authorities deemed it necessary for accountancy purposes to separate out that portion of the airmail postage that was due to the carriers, and that portion that was due to themselves. Thus when airmail services began it was mandatory to use special airmail stamps, and airmail stamps alone, to pay that portion of the postage payable to Pan-American airways, and to use ordinary postage stamps (airmail stamps were forbidden) to pay the normal Post Office charges (first class surface letter rate, plus ancillary charges for registration, and "A.R." service if requested). This Post Office ruling seems to have been strictly adhered to and rare would be the cover showing improper use of airmail and ordinary postage stamps. The airmail rate to the USA in 1930 was set at 80 ctmos per 15 grams. Consequently a single weight airmail letter to the USA should normally bear 93 ctmos in postage stamps (80 ctmos airmail, plus 13 ctmos foreign UPAE first class letter rate), and an airmail cover to a destination in Europe should bear 1.0 Colones (= 100 ctmos) postage (comprised of 80 ctmos airmail to the USA plus 20 ctmos foreign UPU first class letter rate [below].)



Airmail letter, 26 February 1931, from Costa Rica to Germany, flown to New York only.
Postage: 80 ctmos. per 15 grams (2 x 40 ctmos. on 50 ctmos.) + 20 ctmos. foreign letter rate = 100 ctmos..

Incidentally, we have to mention in the passing that it was always possible to send letters from Costa Rica to other UPAE countries at the unsealed "printed matter" rate of only 10 ctmos.. Thus one could in theory find 1930 airmail letters to the |USA rated at only 90 ctmos.: in practice these are rarely found except for the many philatelically contrived first flight covers. Collectors and dealers at that time were largely only interested in getting their covers onto the first flights and getting examples of the relevant first flight cachets. The saving in postage of only 3 ctmos. was only marginal, but it does illustrate what a penny-pinching lot we stamp collectors have always been.

to be continued.

MAILS ACROSS THE ISTHMUS 1840-1955 - Part 4

from an unknown source

Ernest Wiltsie in his monumental work *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific* relates it thus:

> "The *Oregon* arrived on the 18th day of September ..... The *California* followed, arriving in San Francisco October 10th ..... but was the second ship to arrive in succession without the US mails. It was afterwards found that this was due to a dispute between the Postmaster General of the US and the Government of the Province of Panama. Before the great emigration of the "gold rush" started in," (in 1844 a Postal Convention between the US and Nueva Granada had been signed) "the Postmaster General had made a contract to carry the US mails across the Isthmus of Panama, for a purely nominal figure. There had been no idea on either side, of the strange and great world-wide rush of gold seekers who were to cross the Isthmus, and the correspondingly enormous amount of mail that would ensue, due to the springing up of the entirely unexpected El Dorado on the Pacific coast. The amount of mail to be carried across the Isthmus was fully fifty times larger than was anticipated. A new and populous country was unexpectedly developing in the wilderness.
>
> The Governor of Panama protested at the enormous amount of mail that he was expected to carry across the Isthmus for a trifling sum. That made no difference to the Honourable Postmaster General, who had made a contract for a nominal figure, and refused any adequate compensation whatsoever to the Government of Panama for its great and unexpected disbursement in transporting the US mails. As might have been expected, the Postmaster General could argue, but the Governor of Panama, far away and secure in his own territory, could act. He simply instructed the transporters of amil to dump all sacks in the jungle and leave them there to rot. ..... If there was one thing the argonauts could not and would not so without, it was their letters from home, and the outcry in the press against the result of the above procedure was instantaneous and violent. Not being aware of the facts, they blames the Pacific Mail Steamship Co." which held an exclusive US mail contract on the Pacific. "The mail compensation was no small item." Initially "the Government paid $150,000 per annum to the Pacific Mail alone. In later dates it was twice increased until it amounted to $348,250 per annum" in 1855. "The Postmaster General soon saw the error of his ways!"

Things got better with the appointment of Amos Corwine as Consul in October 1849. But, remember that at this time the huge number of letters passing across the isthmus had given birth to the Great Mail Bag Incident and it is quite likely that Nelson had other things on his mind. Be that as it may, the new accord with Nueva Granada laid that particular problem to rest.

Where there is a need surely a means will be devised to meet it, and so it was on the Isthmus. The government mail agents could only do so much and of course could not be expected to give personal attention to the needs of each business house in Baltimore or New Orleans, much less the proverbial Podunk, Iowa. Since the quantum leap in the number of letters passing over the Isthmus was a fact to be contended with the need for a system to insure mail really got to its destination was obvious.

The answer was the private forwarders.

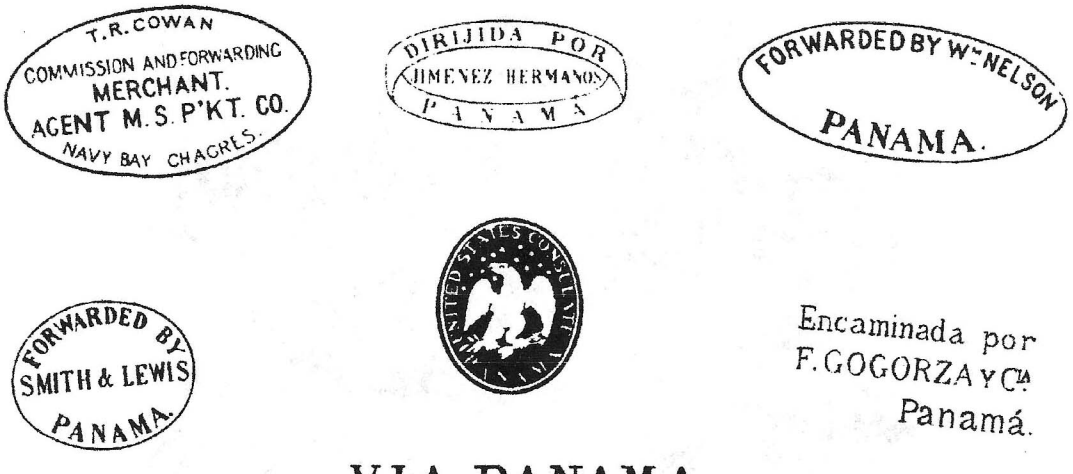
James T De Voss, in his unpublished book *Via Panama* covers this system in great detail and is based on first hand research into the original documents in the National Archives. De Voss contends it was the combination of government and the commercial forwarding agent which made "the system work more efficiently". Who were the forwarding agents? There were Americans, but just as often they were local people consisting of:

> "..... commission merchants, shipping agents, consular officials, importers and operators of express companies [who] frequently doubled as forwarding agents. Letters normally reached [them] through postal channels or through private individuals entrusted to carry them by hand ..... normally, the forwarding agent endorsed each cover in manuscript or applied a handstamp marking to indicate that he had handled that particular piece of mail."

To aid the reader in identifying such covers, suffice it to say that the markings usually read "Forwarded by [name of agent]" or its Spanish equivalent "Encaminada Por [name of agent]". De Voss goes on to relate that the forwarder:

> "..... dispatched each letters to the addressee by the most expeditious means available. Such dispatches were hand-carried by individuals or posted in the mails of a country different from that through which it had been received. In some instances, a second forwarding agent in another country was involved ....."

The whole system of mails was far different in 1848 from what we know today. Almost all mail was sent unpaid, the theory being that to insure delivery one had to make payment contingent upon successful delivery; the other side of that particular coin was the feeling that if a letter was fully prepaid (even if it could have been done, especially on overseas letters – which it couldn't) then there would be no incentive on the part of the Post Office to go to the trouble of delivery. As archaic as this may be looked on today, it was a serious proposition in 1848.



VIA PANAMA

Some of the early forwarder markings

There is some controversy over what this forwarding service cost. In some cases it was undoubtedly free of extra fees due to close relationships between firms or as a means of advertising other (profitable) services.

However, it is supposed that most charged a special fee for this service, for it undoubtedly tied up a certain amount of capital and unquestionably used up valuable time. Evidence of the latter being quite prevalent is noted in an 1853 letter in the De Voss collection where ex-Consul Nelson advised a client in the US that "our charge is 12½% on all postage bills". It is believed that this was the standard fee charged at Panama not only by Nelson, who operated his own service, but by his competitors too – their own little cartel on the Isthmus! That there were literally dozens of forwarders operating in Panama in the 1850s gives ample evidence of the key role they played in the moving of mails.

The new Mail Agent and Consul, A B Corwine, under the December 1849 instructions was charged with the responsibility for (1) taking "charge of all US mails reaching Panama, or originating there for transmission elsewhere and [to] exercise a general supervision in respect to the same …", (2) making payments to the Nueva Granadian Government "at the following terms, to wit: $30 for the first 100 pounds of mail matter conveyed across the Isthmus and $12 for each succeeding 100 pounds conveyed at one trip" and (3) ascertaining "The weight of mails …" and accompanying them. For all of this Corwine was to receive $500 per year, out of which he had to meet expenses for services and commissions.

But the mails still crossed the Isthmus in the old ways and service under Panamanian subcontractors was spotty at best. Once the mails were safely landed they were hauled across the Isthmus just like any other freight, even after harmony was attained between the Governor and the Postmaster General. The mail bags were piled high in the native bungoes (dugout canoes) in the earliest days and as better craft were placed on the Chagres the mails quickly gravitated to them, especially as some were owned and operated by the steamship company. Upon reaching the head of navigation on the river they were off loaded and readied for the hardest part of their voyage – the overland trek to Panama City.

Crossing the isthmus in the olden time.
This whimsical view of the travails of the Las Cruces Trail depicts better than words what it was like "in the olden time".

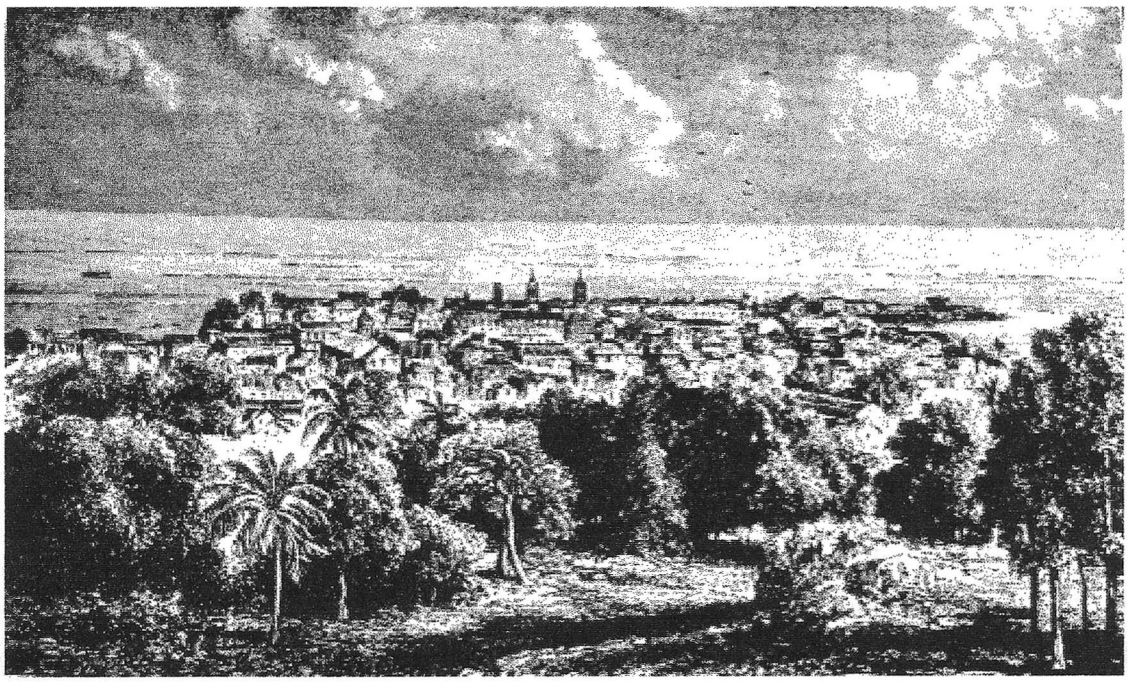
This was accomplished be means of mules or on the backs of men. The Englishman, J D Borthwick, whose memoirs of an 1851 crossing of the isthmus is reprinted in Quaife's *Pictures of Gold Rush California*, recalled the baggage (and mails):

> "being lashed into a sort of wickerwork contrivance ..... and so adjusted with straps that the weight bore directly down on the shoulders. It was astonishing to see what loads these men could carry over such a road ..... two hundred and fifty pounds weight was an average load for a man to walk off with, doing the 25 miles to Panama City in a day and a half."

Words do not exist to properly describe to today's readers the condition of that "road" – once indeed it was a road, built by the Spanish to carry the riches of Peru to the Caribbean for transport to Mother Spain, but long since reduced to ruin. Narrow, steep sided, slippery, gooey, pot-holed, gullied, eroded, numerous water filled pits, dangerous and very fatiguing are but some of the words that come to mind. Yet, after the initial incidents no record of lost mail came to my attention, and it would seem that neither rain nor any other danger kept those early postmen from their appointed rounds. Bayard Taylor described the last stage of the journey:

> "Woe be unto the ship's captain who dared to depart before those canoes made it out to his ship lying to several miles out in the Bay of Panama".

This was necessitated by the twenty plus foot tide at Panama, the many reefs and very gradual slopes of the shoreline.



A bird's eye view of Panama City at high tide from the lower reaches of Ancon Hill, probably near the site of the hospital. Las Bovedas appears at the point at the far right and the twin towers of the cathedral are outlined against the horizon.

to be continued

ENTA AND THE FIRST DOMESTIC AIR MAIL SERVICES OF COSTA RICA

(Part 4)

by Dr RICHARD H SAUNDRY

The First Internal Airmail Services to Puntarenas.

Apparently no covers were flown either to, or from Puntarenas in February 1933. Although there was a direct daily railway service between Puntarenas and San Jose, the airmail service was thought worthwhile since flight times were ony 20 minutes compared with the train journey of about 5 hours. Service to this important Pacific Coast port was not inaugurated until 22nd. May 1933. The operator was also ENTA, and the reason that flights were delayed until this late date was that the landing field in this city was even more affected by flooding than those used elsewhere and this was the first opportunity to use it.

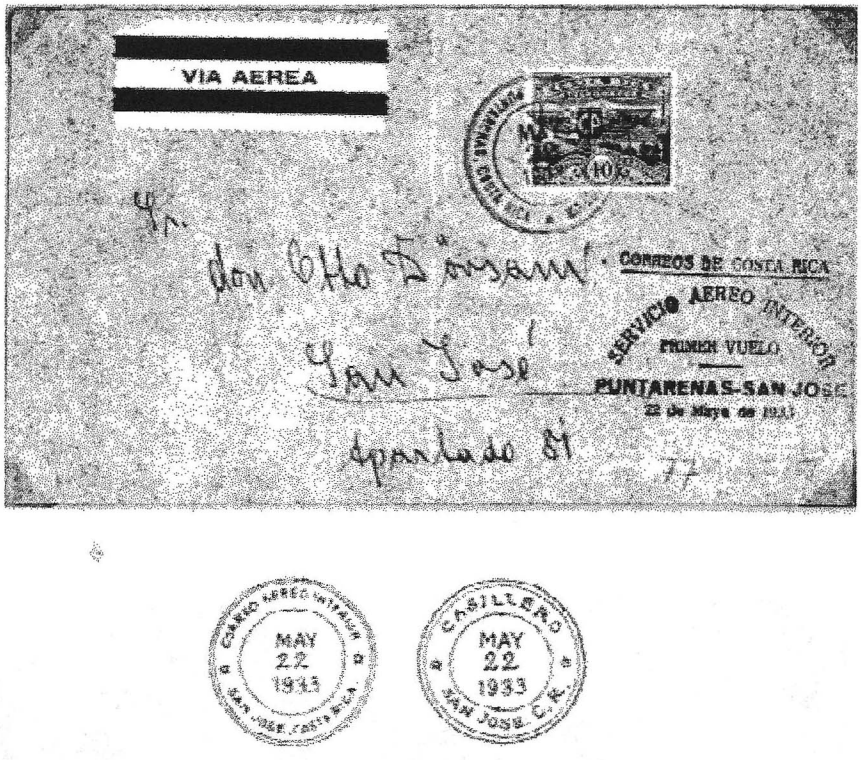


Figure 5. 22 May 1933. First Internal Air Mail Service: Puntarenas to San José.

A different first flight cachet was used for this service (Fig. 5) and as far as I can tell this was a clean issue in that no bogus or fraudulent manipulation of said covers are known. My cover is franked with the 40 ctmos. "winged overprint" air stamp (S.G. 193; Scott C14, issued in either December or March 1932 depending which catalogue you choose to believe): from what I have said above it is unlikely this would have satisfied any current domestic postage rates and I guess it was chosen by the sender as being a rather nice airmail stamp to use.

By May 1933 special double ringed internal airmail circular date stamps had come into use. The adhesives on the Puntarenas cover were cancelled "CORREO AEREO INTERIOR I MAY 22 1933/ PUNTARENAS, COSTA RICA".

On the back of the envelope is a similar "domestic airmail service" receiving office date stamp for San Jose the same day. We note from R.E.G.Davis's book (see below) that ENTA also served Puerto Limon.

I have never seen, and have not read of any first flight covers ENTA to or from this important Atlantic coastal port. Possibly the Costa Rican postal authorities would not have considered the first internal airmail flights by ENTA to or from Limon as strictly being first airmail flights between these two points, since during the flood emergencies winter 1928-29 a regular shuttle airmail service had been successfully operated by military fliers, and subsequently by an aircraft of the United Fruit Company, between Limon and San Jose.

Commercially Flown Internal Air Mail Covers.

We have concentrated hitherto on the first internal flight covers. These were **the** ones of initial philatelic interest and thus were contrived and survive in our collections to this day. What we should not lose sight of is the fact that after the attentions of the philatelists had turned away ENTA continued for several years providing a sustained airmail service throughout the country, and to Guanacaste in particular.

Commercial covers for this service seem particularly hard to find. I illustrate one such cover (Fig.6) flown Liberia to San Jose at the 25 ctmos sealed letter rate 15th. December 1933.

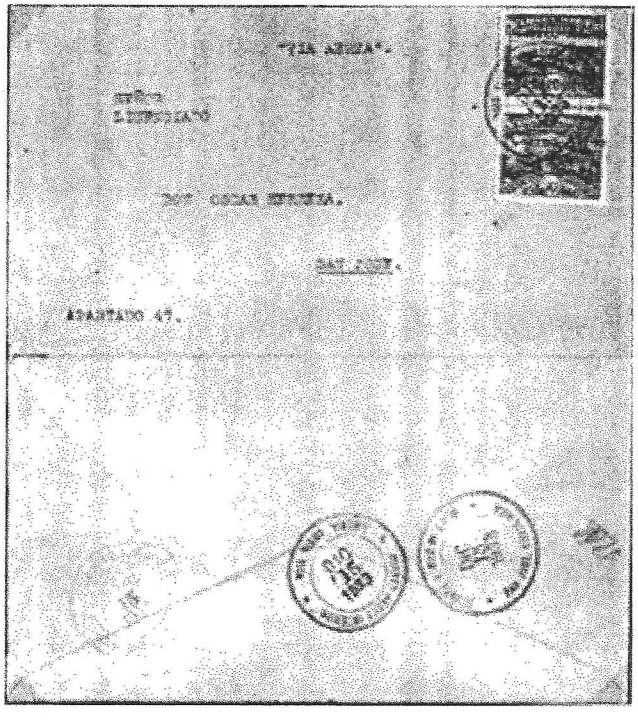


Figure 6. 1933. Internal Air Mail: Libéria to San José.

The postage stamps are properly cancelled with the "Correo Aereo Interior" circular date stamp for Liberia (second strike for good measure on back of envelope), and also on receipt San Jose the same day. Personally I think these commercially flown air covers are very much under-appreciated, and if an informed collector happens across one he or she would have a prize well worth keeping.

Subsequent History of ENTA

R.E.G.Davies in his excellent book "Airlines of Latin America since 1919" (Putnam, 1984, ISBN No. 0 370 30049 1) recounts that whilst ENTA were beginning their services a Costa Rican citizen, Roman Macaya, had been learning to fly in the United States and returned home in his own Curtiss Robin. On 20 January 1934 Macaya founded his own airline, **Aerovias Nacionales,** with much support in Guanacaste, which in turn forced ENTA to put its operation on a more scheduled basis (5th. April). Macaya was unable to get a governmental subsidy, but using a fleet of multi-engined aircraft provided stiff competition for ENTA. In March 1935 Schoenfeldt retired and his place was taken by a Scot, Eric Murray. Ultimately Murray and Macaya reached a gentlemen's agreement whereby they unified tariffs and avoided duplication of services, thus providing a sound foundation for subsequent development of a sound Costa Rican domestic airline system.

NICARAGUA: CATALOGUE CORRECTION

by JOSEPH D HAHN

In all the literature I know, the Higgins & Gage Postal Card No.67 is listed as being issued in 1907. However, I recently acquired a copy of this card with a cancel of December 22, 1906 from Francisco G. Gomez, in Managua. Is anyone aware of an earlier use?